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S E C R E T CONAKRY 000160

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FOR AF/W, AF/EX, DS/IP/AF, INR

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ELAB](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PINS](#) [GV](#)

SUBJECT: PLAUSIBLE REPORTS OF FOREMR ULIMO/LURD MILITIA

REF: CONAKRY 157

Classified By: Political Officer Jessica Davis Ba. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) Post has been working to verify persistent rumors in Conakry that former ULIMO and/or LURD fighters have been recruited by Conte confidante Aicha Conneh, widow of LURD leader Sekou Conneh, to combat direct threats to Conte and his regime. Poloff spoke with Marguerite Guilavogui (strictly protect), President of the Macenta branch of the Mano River Women for Peace Network, who told us that three truckloads of men, allegedly recruited on the Liberia-Guinea border, have made their way to Conakry. Guilavogui is a retired teacher and was program manager for two successful Embassy Democracy and Human Rights Funds grants to conduct activities to mitigate conflict and strengthen the capacity of the women's network. There are ethnic ties between the Muslim Mandingo in Macenta and on the Liberian side of the border, and Guineans were among the pool of ULIMO and LURD recruits. Macenta still plays host to many former ULIMO and LURD fighters who have settled there.

¶2. (S) Guilavogui said that groups of former combatants left from the Liberian side of the border on or about February 6, after being recruited by Conneh. On their way into Guinea, the men reportedly raided three villages, with the village of Wozalowazo (sp?) suffering the greatest damage. The men broke down the doors to houses, took money and valuables, and in some cases beat the residents. The men reportedly arrived in Macenta the night of February 7 at which time they refueled and assembled provisions, including additional fuel in plastic containers. Guilavogui said that although fuel is scarce in Macenta, the men worked with relatives and former compatriots now living in Macenta, who obtained the cooperation of military officers to get supplies. She said that she heard from colleagues that the men arrived in Conakry and are being housed in two villas owned by Conneh in Enta, a neighborhood in the close-in suburbs that was the site of some of the fiercest clashes between security forces and demonstrators in each of the last three general strikes.

¶3. (S) Guilavogui told Poloff that in order to preserve peace, she and others have tried to convince local Guinean relatives of the purported mercenaries that "it will do no good to protect these men, because even though you are their relatives, you will be their first victims." Guilavogui was hesitant to talk with us about the situation because "The entire city of Macenta is under threat from militias loyal to Conneh." She observed that during the January strike, Macenta was the only municipality where there were no marches because the community was frightened of militia leaders. Asked whether she knows if they would target union leaders, Guilavogui replied that the men "will do what the lady with the money asks."

COMMENT

14. (S) The alleged presence of former ULIMO or LURD mercenaries has been a topic of speculation in Conakry for the last two days. Guilavogui's information is plausible, and corroborates a call made to poloff by CNTG leader Rabiadou Serah Diallo Wednesday night. Not everyone agrees, however. DATT reports that senior military leaders staunchly denied any involvement of Liberian mercenaries or Guinea Bissau in the internal affairs of Guinea. We will continue to dig into this story which, if true, has serious implications.

MCDONALD